

Private Fostering



**Is your child living with another family?
Are you looking after someone else's child?**

Call: 0300 111 8007 Select option 1, then 3.

staffordshire.gov.uk/privatefostering

What is Private Fostering?

Private fostering is when a child or young person under 16 years old (or 18 if they have a disability) is looked after for 28 days or more by someone who is not a close relative, guardian or person with parental responsibility. Close relatives include parents, step-parents, aunts, uncles and grandparents.

It is not private fostering if the arrangement was made by a social worker at Staffordshire County Council or if the person looking after the child is an approved foster carer.

People become private foster carers for all sorts of reasons. Private foster carers can be a friend of the child's family, or be someone who is willing to care for the child of a family they do not know.

Common situations may be:

- Children and young people living apart from their families
- Children sent to this county for education and health care by their parents who live overseas
- Children whose parents work or study involves unsociable hours
- Children living with another family as a result of parental separation or divorce
- Children and young people living with a friend's family or the family of a boyfriend or girlfriend
- Children on holiday exchange
- Children from overseas attending private/language or boarding schools and reside with host families

Notifying Staffordshire County Council

By law Staffordshire County Council must be informed about all private fostering situations. The child's parent(s), private foster carer and anyone else involved in the arrangement i.e. guardianship agencies, school or health professionals are legally required to inform the Children and Families Service.

***Please contact the Staffordshire Children Advice & Support (SCAS) team on: 0300 111 8007 select option 1, then 3.**

People involved in private fostering must inform Staffordshire County Council in writing within the following time scales:

the child is not yet living with the private foster carers

Six weeks beforehand

if the child will move in with private foster carers in less than six weeks

Immediately

if the child is already living with private foster carers.

Immediately



What will Children and Families do?

We will arrange to make regular visits to see how the child has settled with you and provide you with support. We will also be able to help you with practical information and advice, as well as details about benefits that may be available to you.

We will work in partnership with the child, parents and private foster carer to ensure that the best possible arrangements are in place for the child. This includes:

- visiting the parent(s), the child and private foster carer
- helping to make sure that the child's holistic needs including racial, cultural, linguistic and religious needs are being met
- allocating a social worker to complete an assessment of the child's needs and the carers capacity to meet those needs.

What should professionals do?

Professionals should ensure that Staffordshire County Council know about all private fostering arrangements.

This includes a wide range of people who come in contact with children including teachers, religious leaders, doctors and health visitors. Professionals should also encourage the child's parent or carer to notify Children and Families.

You will not be breaching confidentiality by notifying children's services, but you will be helping to safeguard a child.

Why do Children and Families have to be involved?

The Children Act 1989 gives Children and Families a legal duty to safeguard the wellbeing of privately fostered children. This includes making sure that they are;

- Safe and well looked after
- Healthy
- Receiving a proper education
- Being encouraged to reach their full potential
- Keeping in touch with people who are important to them
- Living with someone who helps them value their culture and sense of identity
- Properly supported when they become independent.

Useful Contacts

SCAS team 0300 111 8007 - select option 1, then 3.

Emergency duty service (out of hours):

Tel: 0345 604 2886

Useful websites:

CoramBAAF: corambaaf.org.uk

Main County Council site:

staffordshire.gov.uk/privatefostering

Welfare concerns

The majority of children in private fostering arrangements will be happy and thrive. However, some will;

- Suffer from loss, separation and emotional distress
- Suffer abuse and exploitation
- Have no contact with their parents
- Move from carer to carer, sometimes across countries
- Have no one in the UK with legal rights to make important decisions for them
- Remain in the UK without any formal documents and without legal status or other rights such as the right to work and education.

All these issues can be better managed, prevented and resolved if children are identified and referred to the right services sooner.



What are the next steps?

To find out more about Private Fostering or to tell someone that you think a child might be privately fostered you can call:

SCAS team on:

0300 111 8007

Select option 1, then 3.

Or you can go on-line:

staffordshire.gov.uk/privatefostering



It is an offence not to notify Staffordshire County Council if you are caring for someone else's child as a private foster carer.